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Agenda item 96

**Third United Nations Conference on the Least
Developed Countries**

**Letter dated 21 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative
of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Cotonou Declaration, adopted by the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries, held in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, from 5 to 7 August 2002 (see annex).

I should like to request that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 96.

(Signed) Joël W. Adechi
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Least Developed Countries Coordination Bureau



Annex to the letter dated 21 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries

Cotonou Declaration

We, the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries ;

Having met in Cotonou, Republic of Benin from 5 to 7 August 2002 ;

Recalling the Millennium Declaration and in particular the Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty ;

Recalling the adoption of the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (LDC III) for the decade 2001 – 2010 as a roadmap for the sustainable development of our countries ;

Recalling also the commitment made by the international community in the Doha Ministerial Conference of WTO to address the marginalization of LDCs in international trade and to assist them fully integrate into the multilateral trading system ;

- 1- Reaffirm that poverty eradication and sustainable development are imperatives pursued by our Governments in order to improve living standards based on strengthening of our productive capacity for sustainable patterns of production and consumption.**
- 2- Reaffirm also our commitment to the outcomes of the Third UN Conference on Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001 – 2010, which has adopted as its overarching goal the reduction of extreme poverty by half by 2015.**
- 3- Reiterate our full attachment to a strengthened partnership with a view to achieving speedy implementation of the goals and objectives embedded therein.**
- 4- Recognize that while LDCs have the primary responsibility for their own development, the role of the international community and the multilateral institutions is essential in providing adequate resources and technical assistance to enable LDCs enhance their productive capacities in order to build the basis of their sustainable development.**
- 5- Call upon the United Nations system and all other multilateral organizations as well as other stakeholders including the private sector to mobilize increased resources in support of the implementation of the LDC-III Programme of**

Action with maximum coordination, synergy and full commitment, as a matter of priority.

- 6- Call on the governing bodies of the organizations of the UN system, as well as other multilateral organizations to mainstream the implementation of the LDC-III Programme of Action within their programme of work, as well as in their intergovernmental processes.
- 7- Commend those organizations of UN system, in particular UNDP, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNESCO and WIPO that have already adopted decisions to mainstream LDC-III POA in their programme of work, and call on those who have not yet done so to do so as soon as possible.
- 8- Acknowledge the pivotal role of the Economic and Social Council in the review and strengthening Coordination of actions of the UN system for the implementation of the LDC-III POA. In this regard, due attention should be accorded to issues affecting LDCs under ECOSOC regular agenda item entitled << *integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow up of the major United Nations Conferences and Summits*>>.
- 9- Welcome the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and call upon the new office to engage in advocacy, reporting and UN system wide coordination of issues of LDCs as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly.
- 10- Express our appreciation to the Secretary General for the appointment of the High Representative and underline the need to accelerate the full operationalization of the office so as to enable the adequate coordination and mobilization of resources for a timely and effective implementation of the POA.
11. Recognize and appreciate the critical role of UNCTAD in implementing the Brussels POA in the areas within its mandate, and in close collaboration with the Office of the High Representative ; and call upon the Secretary General to enhance the LDCs specific operational capacity of the United Nations system organizations, in particular of UNCTAD, in their activities aimed at supporting the Least Developed Countries.
12. Recommend, *inter alia*, the elaboration by the OHR of a matrix of achievement at country level as well as at the level of the UN system organizations, other multilateral organizations and other stakeholders, for consideration, annually, in ECOSOC substantive session.
- 13- Stress the need for establishing a Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries to be managed by the Office of the High Representative to provide support to LDCs in the implementation of the Brussels POA, and call for the Secretary General to take

the appropriate steps in this regard at the 57th ordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly, without prejudice to the existing UNCTAD Trust Fund for LDCs.

- 14- Recognize the importance of the establishment of a national committee in each LDC for the follow-up of the implementation of LDC-III POA.
- 15- Recognize also the importance of the designation of a focal point for the follow-up of the implementation of LDC-III POA in all United Nations System organizations and in other multilateral institutions.
- 16- Urge the United Nations system to effectively implement the outcomes of all UN-sponsored international conferences in a manner that ensure the achievement of the goals and objectives of the LDC-III POA.
- 17- Emphasize the importance of financial resources mobilization in achieving a firm structural basis which would sustain high per capita growth rates in LDCs and in this regard, call for steady efforts to implement the commitments made by our development partners for implementing LDC-III POA, particularly those related to ODA, aid and its effectiveness as well as to external debt, to FDI and other private external flows.
- 18- Call on development partners, including multilateral financial organizations to finance priority programmes devoted to poverty eradication in LDCs increasingly with grant assistance, including from new and additional sources, to alleviate their future debt burden.
- 19- Invite donors to redefine debt sustainability criterias so as to ensure that HIPC's to have access to more resources, including indispensable loans to fill the gap necessary to finance priority programmes.
- 20- Also emphasize the importance of implementing the outcomes of the "**Monterrey Consensus**" as it relates to LDCs concerns.
- 21- Further emphasize the importance of the outcome of The fourth WTO Ministerial Conference held at Doha and call upon the international community to fully implement those provisions of the Doha Declaration in favour of LDCs, in this context, recognize the important role to be played by international organizations referred to in the Doha Declaration to assist LDC's in providing technical support and build their capacities to participate in the ongoing Doha work programme.
- 22- Welcome the proposals of the UN Secretary General that WSSD should make progress in five key areas: water, energy, health agriculture and biodiversity, and due to the more broader and specific needs, and priorities of LDCs, emphasize upon the urgent need to include in the plan of implementation of WSSD

LDCs concerns as they related to, *inter alia*, the areas of: productive capacity, trade, financial flows, debt, education, physical infrastructure, environmental degradation, employment, sustainable tourism and environment degradation.. Therefore the outcomes of WSSD should emphasize the urgent need for the implementation of LDC-III POA.

- 23- Emphasize the importance and urgency for the International Community to increase substantially the level of financial and technical support targeted to the enhancement of the productive capacity of the rural sector in the LDCs. In this context, call for strengthened collaboration between UNCCD, UNCDF and GEF in the implementation of activities identified by the countries concerned, and invite the international community to increase its financial support to UNCCD and UNCDF to that end.
- 24- Draw attention to the vital role commodities and agriculture play in their economies an important provider of employment, export earnings, and Government revenue. In this context, call for strengthened collaboration between UNCCD, UNCDF, GEF and CFC and invite the international community to increase its financial and technical support to these institutions to that end.
- 25- Urge LDCs partners to provide sufficient financial resources to multilateral development organizations and to strengthen activities covered by the Second Account of the Common Fund for Commodities, without a decline in other concessionary funds available for LDCs.
- 26- Call on our development partners to fulfill their commitments to provide LDCs with financial resources and environmentally sound technologies on a preferential basis.
- 27- Welcome the United Nations initiatives and the G-8 to bridge the digital divide that has left LDCs behind in the area of information technology and call on them to help bridge that divide and to mainstream the LDCs in this sector.
- 28- Welcome the measures taken by developed and developing countries as well as by multilateral organizations to promote South-South co-operation and call on these stakeholders to substantially and enhance their resources and efforts for capacity building and development in Least Developed Countries, including the importance of the sharing of best practices in sustainable development in the Least Developed Countries.
- 29- Express strong support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to achieve sustainable development in Africa and recommend that this programme make avenue for supporting the Least Developed

Countries in the region. and in this connection, encourage the international community to intensify its financial and technical support to it.

- 30- Welcome the decision by the General Assembly of the United Nations, as contained in its resolution A/56/180, to convene in 2003 an International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, and fully support its preparatory process.
- 31- Support the effective implementation of the Programme of Action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States and subsequently of the Declaration and Review Documents adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-second special session.
- 32- Reiterate the importance of strengthened coordination of LDCs views, positions and actions for the implementation of the Brussels POA and in this regard reaffirm that the LDCs Coordination Bureau established to that end should, during its mandate, represent LDCs interests and concerns in the UN System, at all UN centers and in all international and multilateral forums.
- 33- Invite the development partners to pay a special attention to the situation of post-conflict Least Developed Countries with a view to enabling them to rehabilitate and reconstruct, as appropriate, political, social and economic infrastructures and to assist them in achieving their development priorities.
- 34- Call upon the international Community to ensure that countries graduating from LDC status are facilitated to have a smooth transition so that their developmental programmes and projects may be sustained at a level not worse off than before graduation.
- 35- Express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people and government of the Republic of Benin for their warm hospitality and for the excellent arrangements made for the success of the Cotonou LDCs Ministerial Conference./-